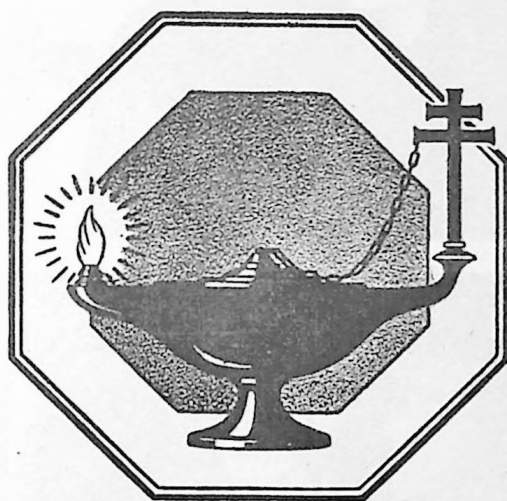


TOC H JOURNAL



MARCH—MCMXLV

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THREEPENCE



Above: TWO MEN ON LEAVE FIND THE TOC H CLUB IN BRUSSELS.

Below: TWO MEN ON 'REST' FIND THE TOC H LAMP IN POPERINGHE.

(The first pair anonymous; the second are Tynesiders, Pte. H. Culvert of Wallsend and Pte. H. C. Gough of Newcastle).

(Photos: Current Affairs, Ltd.).

TOC H JOURNAL

VOL. XXIII

MARCH, 1945

No. 3

ECHOES FROM THE OLD HOUSE

1. Belated Christmas

FOR twenty-four hours, on and off, Paul Slessor and I hung about the aerodrome, in company with bored but philosophic colonels, impatient war correspondents, disconsolate airmen due for leave or 'Ats' going home to be married. A 'low ceiling' on this side of the Channel or on that thwarted our flight hour by hour. Down in the City happy troops on 48 hours' leave from Holland were swarming in and out of the over-flowing 'Bon Marché' or the big shop run by Army Welfare, buying their presents for the folks at home. We could picture the scene also down in the Old House at Poperinghe, which we had so lately and reluctantly left. For already, everywhere, Christmas was in the air.

At last, on the afternoon of December 16, we got the word to 'emplane' and start; we made a good crossing between the fog and the storm. We did not know until we bought an evening paper in London that on that very day Runstedt had started his last desperate drive into Belgium, with Brussels and Antwerp in the mind's eye of his soldiers. We could not know how this would in a few days change the Christmas scene, not only in the Capital, but right down to Poperinghe on the distant border of Belgium.

There is the picture in a letter to Tubby afterwards from the Army chaplain, a member of Toc H, who had moved into the Old House just after we left it:

"I am so sorry not to have written to you for Christmas, but life turned a bit chaotic just at that time.

Here we were getting set for the most wonderful Christmas we could have had away from home, with services all arranged in the Upper

Room, dances laid on in the town, parties fixed for the kiddies from our lads' billets, and quite a decent sum of money collected from the lads to get them toys.

Five days before Christmas this was all blown into the blue, and we were off, hot foot, to stop the Hun before he crossed the Meuse. We dashed across the country, and arrived when he was within about four miles of the river.

We fought him on Christmas Eve, and in the first hour of battle had knocked out four of his tanks without loss to ourselves. We fought some more on Christmas Day and did well and checked him.

We have just got back and installed ourselves—and are we pleased! The boys' one thought, beyond leave home, was to get back here.

Everything is starting up again. The C.O. has declared Sunday, January 21st, to be Christmas Day! All the festivities we missed are being laid on as fast as we know how.

Furthermore, I'm back in the Old House, sleeping in 'The General's' little room, on the right of the door up to the Upper Room. And a wonderful time is starting, with fellows constantly dropping in—and not for just any chit-chats either, but for *real* things. Before Christmas some of the lads themselves had asked for a Bible Study Circle. This is being re-started now and they're wonderfully keen, though we haven't had our first session yet. Evening prayers were started again yesterday, and tonight we had nine, plus Charles (Young) and myself.

I see the prospects of doing more of my real work than I've been able to do at any time in my Army life. Jove! but its great how things are working—but pray for me like fury, please Tubby. I can't cope otherwise, and it's not a matter of just coping, but of doing something of far more *quality* than that . . ."

Tubby (who has since gone back to Poperinghe to be, as he says, "assistant chaplain") replied, and here are extracts from his letter:

"The warmest thing in (snowy) London is your letter, with all its red-hot news of the Old House . . . Here at All Hallows we shall render thanks for what you say about it.

Your preparations for a happy Christmas, even

before the sudden summons came, were likely to produce a blessed period for all concerned, especially the kiddies. Fathers and mothers now in Poperinghe, when they were children, looked to Talbot House for any happiness they had in war-time. Their children do the same, now you are there. Then, just before the Festivities began Runstedt's desire to re-visit Antwerp cancelled everything. You and your men were flung into the fury, postponing Christmas in the calendar for almost a whole month. Now you are back, with thankful hearts, in the old Home-from-Home, which weaves its great magic round your men.

The cynic and scorner of religion has here a case to answer. Let him try to tell your men that Christmas is not true, and Bethlehem a blunder and a fraud! I think they would not only laugh at him, but they would treat him with a certain pity, as one both blind and deaf. If

he insisted on his point of view they'd deal with him as they have dealt with Runstedt!

So the Old House, like an old violin, has leapt back into music, none the worse for its long silence, and the Master's hand not only has revived its memories, but given it work to do in its old age, among your men—some of the best I've seen. Who is, indeed, sufficient for these things? . . ."

No further details of Christmas Day on January 21 in the Old House have yet reached us, save a note from Charles Young, written that night, that they had had a celebration at 8 a.m., a morning service, with another Communion after, and an evening service taken by a soldier, with another acting as organist. B.B.

2. On the First Floor

It was pointed out in a very early piece of Toc H literature—*Half the Battle*, by B.B., 1922—that the different floors of the Old House in the last war catered, in ascending order, for the needs of whole men:

"Here the House, being indeed a tall House and not a dug-out under the ground or a wooden hut squatting upon it, was well adapted to meet their need. Its different floors provided exactly the comparative degrees of space and quietness by which a man rises from the satisfaction of his most elementary to that of his most fundamental necessities. He side-stepped out of the street (and out of the war as far as might be) on the ground floor . . . and found the drought in his throat and the hole in his middle immediately confronted by the canteen . . . The ground floor left no doubt that the House was out to cater for a man's bodily needs.

To climb the stairs, winding and not too well-lighted, was to ascend to the realm of the human mind . . . The next step put a man in the Library . . . The food provided ranged from Nat Gould to Bimettalism and Pastoral Theology, and it was all thumb-marked and consumed by somebody sooner or later . . .

A man might, and often did, climb still higher . . . until he came to the foot of a ladder. This was a very proper figure of 'the steep ascent of Heaven! . . . It was in the Upper Room that tens of thousands found the best gift among many in the House."

Today, thirty years later, the 'lay-out' of Talbot House remains the same and caters in the same order for another generation in khaki. In "the realm of the mind" the Old House in the last war was no stranger to lectures, debates and discussion. *Tales of Talbot House* refers to the annual debate on

the motion "that this House is firmly convinced that the war will be over this year"—carried in 1916 by 150 to 8, in 1917 by 200 to 15, and in January, 1918, by a casting vote only. It goes on to mention debates on 'the Economic position of Women,' 'the Nationalisation of Railways,' 'the Ethics of Scrounging,' 'Ireland,' 'Federation' and 'The Colour Problem in the Empire'—all of them, be it observed, still burning questions, unsettled and hotly debated thirty years later.

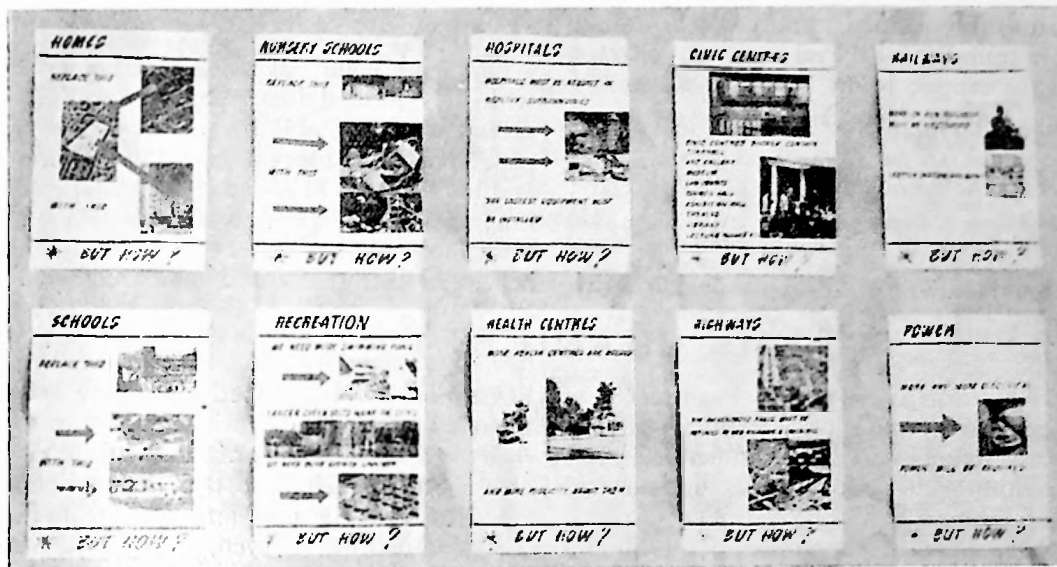
"Beyond the formal debates" (*Tales continues*), "the House ran in 1916 and 1917 a series of lectures on Town Planning, the Housing Problem, Back to the Land, etc., when officers with professional knowledge of the questions received the keenest and closest appreciation."

Even in March, 1918, with the avalanche of the last German 'Big Push' about to fall on Flanders, Tubby writes:

"Thursday, 21st (Vernal Equinox), is full of notes of a conference on moral education, one of a series we were holding in the House on Thursdays . . ." The preliminary bombardment (what is nowadays called 'softening-up') of Poperinghe continued throughout Holy Week. "On Maundy Thursday it was intermittent; and I see," writes Tubby, "that the Education Conference tackled 'Lessons in Biology'."

The Future is Ours

And now, in 1945, history is repeating itself in the Old House. Serving men are as interested in world questions—and as worried as they were in those days about the prob-



blems which will face them on their return to 'civvy street.' Charles Young, now Warden of the Old House, sends us a specimen notice from the board in the entrance hall:—

"Come and take part in a Discussion at Toe H, at 19.30 hrs. every Monday.

Subject for next Monday: 'What shall we do with Britain?' (a discussion of some of the problems at home—and of suggested solutions. A sequel to last Monday's subject, 'What shall we do with Germany?')

Speaker: Capt. W. T. Brooks. Come and listen. Come and give your views."

Another notice now appearing on the board reads:

"The Future is Ours"

"This is the title of a new and attractive display on show on the 1st Floor. The display will interest all."

Charles Young writes that—

"This Housing Exhibition was organised by some of the boys—a series of pictures cut out, with various painted backgrounds, all backed on brown paper which is pinned to the walls round the first landing. Suitable literature and booklets, supplied by the Town Planning Association, lie around on a table in the centre."

He sends some photographs which, even on their small scale, give some idea of the scheme of the display. One 'screen' (here reproduced) deals in a picture or two and a sentence or so (often just 'Replace this—with

this,' and, the question, 'But how?') with ten subjects, in a 'panel' each—Homes, Nursery Schools, Hospitals, Civic Centres, Railways, Schools, Recreation, Health Centres, Highways, Power. Another 'screen' bears the bold legend 'Reconstruct



tion must be planned', and proceeds to indicate a number of 'Problems' in pictures, with the caption below 'Without a Plan.'

Other photographs lead us to a little more detail. Two sides of recreation out of doors are the theme of one (here reproduced):

"Holiday Camps—not left to chance but properly planned by central authority," and "National Parks—our beautiful countryside must be preserved," backed by the warning "We have

the Barlow Report, the Scott Report, the Uthwatt Report—but we have no National Plan!"

One more point. If men on active service, with very limited material (presumably pictures cut out of odd magazines and newspapers) at their disposal, can stage so simple and ingenious a challenge to the mind, could not many a Toc H unit at home work out something a little more elaborate for the benefit of themselves and their neighbours?

TOC H AND B.E.L.R.A.

THIS year, 1945, is the 21st Anniversary of the inauguration of The British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, and, to celebrate it, a nation-wide campaign is being launched with the object of raising £210,000 (£10,000 for every year of the Association's life) to provide the funds for a great forward move.

Most Toc H members will know of the close association between Toc H and B.E.L.R.A. and it is, therefore, natural that Toc H should be interested in this campaign and ready to do everything within its power to assist. The main contribution of Toc H to the work is, of course, the provision of lay workers, and Tubby's article in the January JOURNAL makes it very clear that the time has come when this challenge must be presented again to the membership with renewed urgency. The money raised in 1945 will mean that the number of these workers can be greatly increased, and, as Tubby has pointed out, B.E.L.R.A. will look to Toc H to supply the men for work in the field.

In addition to this Toc H can certainly help the Association in its task of arousing public interest on the question of leprosy and it is to be hoped that during the year many units of Toc H will co-operate with B.E.L.R.A. in arranging meetings, exhibitions, etc., towards this end.

The national campaign will be launched at a Mansion House meeting, to be held in London on April 26, with the Lord Mayor of London in the chair. The chief speaker will be Colonel Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary. On the evening of Tuesday, June 26, there will be a popular evening meeting

in London, and it is hoped that many Toc H members within reach will support this by their presence. Details of this will be available shortly. Meantime unit secretaries are asked to book the date and arrange parties.

A great many other events will be organised by B.E.L.R.A. up and down the country and these will provide many opportunities for local co-operation. B.E.L.R.A. has some fifty local branches throughout the country, and it is suggested that Toc H should make contact with these local committees wherever they are not already in touch. Where there is no local B.E.L.R.A. committee Toc H can help by arranging a meeting, public or otherwise, for which B.E.L.R.A. would do its best to provide a speaker. In these places it would be a very great help if Toc H could interest sufficient influential public people with the ultimate aim of forming a local B.E.L.R.A. committee. Units willing to help in this way are asked to communicate direct with—The Rev. A. E. Payton, Propaganda Secretary of B.E.L.R.A., at the B.E.L.R.A. offices—167, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

Thanks to the advances made in the treatment and control of leprosy within recent years the cure of a large number of sufferers has been effected and in some of the very worst cases the disease has been arrested. But there are still at least five million lepers in the world, two million of whom are in the British Empire. Toc H is pledged to support B.E.L.R.A. in its splendid efforts to free our fellow British subjects from this terrible scourge. J. TWINCH AND A. G. CHURCHER.

SINEWS OF PEACE

2. A Member makes a Suggestion

At the start of the war we estimated our financial needs at £100,000 for war work and £50,000 to carry us over into 'post-war.' Treble the first figure has been reached but all members, we hope, realise that under the War Charities Act, this War Services Fund belongs to the Service work and *not* to Toc H; we cannot use any surplus there may be for the family's peace-time purposes. The second figure of £50,000 may sound a large sum at first glance, but, at a second glance, you may feel bound to add *per annum*; it might cover the first year, it might not. Take one single item, admittedly likely to be the largest—staff. Before the war Toc H, at home and overseas, was served by fifty or so full-time men, mostly (but no one can say extravagantly) paid. After the war, if both membership and work prove to have grown, this number can scarcely be smaller. It may have to be much larger—and, with the great rise in the cost of living, it is bound to be more expensive per man.

Where is the money, for staff and everything else, coming from? Toc H, at least in its best periods, has always insisted that its duty was to help itself before it appealed for money to folk outside. And there are countless instances among the membership of men and women giving 'until it hurts.' Already, as the war draws towards its close, this principle is much alive in the minds and wills of members. 'Family' Funds, as a 'Peace Thanksgiving,' have been started in various units and Areas. There will be more to say about this effort of personal giving on the part of our members and Builders.

Those Post-war Credits

For the moment let us note a suggestion which comes from one of our members, sometime a Padre on our staff, now Minister of a church. He writes:

"I feel you may be interested in a scheme I have in mind . . .

The present financial position of Toc H is not serious owing to the vast majority of salaries and

working expenses being chargeable to the War Services Fund. The real problem is the money which must be available for the Movement after the war and which will have to come from different sources and will not be so easily raised when the popular appeal of Services work can no longer be made.

We have always had the guiding principle that Toc H tries to pay its own way and that part of our training in responsibility and citizenship lies in our own sense of the stewardship of money. Many of us have very real cause to be thankful to Toc H in a multitude of ways, and now that the end of the war is coming into sight we have further cause for gratitude.

I suggest therefore that we set on foot a special appeal for the post war funds of Toc H and couple with it the idea of thank-offering and that it should take the following form:—

Most people have to pay income tax in some form or other during the war taxation period and have been issued with Post War Credit Certificates for varying amounts each year. While we expect to see the money or credit in concrete form some day, yet at the same time the majority of people could and would, I believe, set aside one or more of these certificates for the credit of Toc H Incorporated.

In this way we can give to Toc H far more than we should normally be able to afford to hand over in real hard cash here and now. For example, my wife and I have two certificates representing a proportion of Income Tax paid during our time in England in 1940-42. One of them is worth about £15 and we would like to start the fund by handing it over to Toc H. You will appreciate that we could not afford to give that amount out of current income, but we certainly could afford to forego the cashing in of that certificate.

In this way a really large sum of money could be raised and now is the time to start in on it. The temper of the hour is ripe. The need for personal use of the Certificates has not yet arisen. We will need that Post War Fund very soon now and to what better use could we put our 'forgotten balance.'

If you are prepared to put this into practice right away we shall be very glad to make over our credit of £15 approx. to Toc H Incorporated Post War Funds.

I understand that this can be done and no doubt you will be able to check up on it. It really needs to be tackled imaginatively with a good deal of publicity through the JOURNAL, Area Executives, Staff talks, Revenue Committees, District teams and units. Then of course you might consider approaching Voluntary Helpers in Clubs, and the General Public. They all have cause to be thankful to Toc H and many would feel, as we do, that it is an easy way of giving quite a lot of cash.

In six months it will be too late. The feeling and temper will be one of 'where can we find the cash to buy a car or refurnish' and then someone will remember the jolly old Post War Credits!"

CUT FLOWERS

As rootless stem awhile may bring
Fresh buds of loveliness to birth,
And beauty linger for a time
In flower torn from fertile earth.

So lives the flower of courage still
And by its rootless living brings
A splendour and a hope, to cheat
The deadness at the heart of things.

As light, new-quenched, may still burn on
Awhile within the retentive eye,
So shine the lovely virtues still,
As surely doomed to pale and die.

For rootless flower, reflected light,
Claim but a brief unnatural day,
Concealing with a lustrous mask
The darkened features of decay.

Nor will new living harvests shine
In beauty on the wastes of death
Till Man upon his knees replants
The seeds first sown at Nazareth.

A.G.C.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Miss M. CROZIER on being bidden by the troops on the spot to 'put up' Paratroop Wings on her uniform in recognition of her conduct at the Toc H Services Club in Athens during the recent fighting.

To W. J. CALLOW, Lieut., R.N., a member of Bristol-Clifton Group and a hosteller at Mark IX, on a Mention in Dispatches.

To WALTER ('BILL') SCRAGG, Sergt., 10th Leicestershire Bn., Home Guard, a member of Barrow-on-Soar Branch, on the award of the B.E.M.

To RONALD SHIPLEY, Sergt., R.E., a member of Melksham Branch, on the award of the M.M.

To the following members of Portsmouth District:—

FREDERICK CHARLES ANDREWS, Sergt., R.A.M.C., a member of North End

Group, on the award of the M.M. (for performing an amputation without a surgeon's aid, in a deserted Field Hospital).

EDWARD WHITE MOORE, Flying Officer, R.A.F., a member of Portsmouth Branch, on the award of the D.F.C.

DAVID ARTHUR POCKON, Lieut., R.N., a member of Cosham Group, on a Mention in Dispatches.

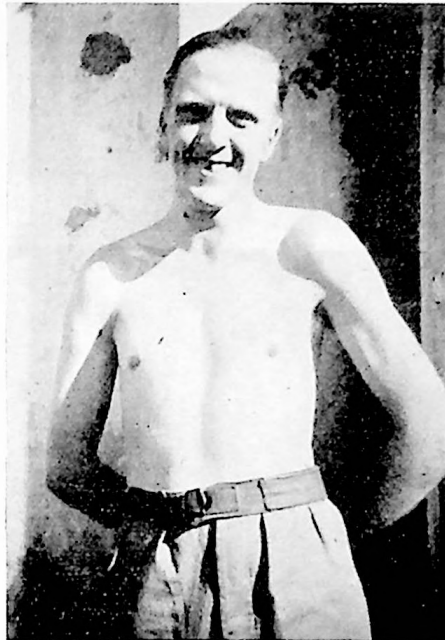
REUBEN WADE, Warrant Officer, R.N., a member of Cosham Group, on the award of the B.E.M.

And to the following members of the Portsmouth Toc H Rover Crew:—

Flying Officer A. BELL, (D.F.M. and D.F.C.); Flying Officer R. HAZLEHURST (D.F.C.); Flying Officer D. J. P. MATTHEWS (D.F.C.); Flight Lieut. F. A. THOMAS (D.F.C.)

SCENES IN S.E.A.C.

1. On the Move in Burma



Arthur Servante — and — Gunner Sanders.

IT is an open secret that no one carries the flag of Toc H higher in S.E.A.C. than Arthur Servante, who served his apprenticeship to our work at St. Stephen's and in the Services Club at York. At Elephant Point, the leave centre on the Arakan beach (see Richard Sharp's broadcast description of it, printed in the JOURNAL, April, 1944), he helped to make Toc H a 'household word' with officers and men, and, when the monsoon washed out this camp, he moved nearer to the enemy at Maungdaw and started up again. The snapshots of his smile (the rest is mostly lost in the shadows of a Burma day) and of his orderly and helper, Gunner Sanders, were taken there by Len Scarfe (late East London Area and Central Executive), who now works with us.

The Club at Maungdaw

At Maungdaw Toc H occupies a building which looks imposing in the hints dropped by two more of Len Scarfe's snaps, (see on next page). They show two interesting

occasions. In the upper one the white figure is the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bombay, 'holding court' with Roman Catholic soldiers outside the Club. In the lower one the Anglican Bishop of Assam, in a white cassock, sits among the men he had just confirmed in the Club. Alan Cowling (Toc H Commissioner, Far East) writes:

"To look at the building one might imagine that it is right in civilisation. Actually it is the only *pukka* building in the district. It was shelled to blazes two years ago, and when we took over, the shrapnel holes in the roof and walls had to be patched. The Sappers did a marvellous job of work. We scrounged some distemper for the walls inside and used 'gunny' (hessian) to make false ceilings. Railway posters completed all that could be done within a few miles of the Japs to make a 'home'!"

With an Indian Division

'Uncle Arthur,' as the troops call Servante, is now attached to a Division and moving with it. In a Christmas letter to 'Lako' he wrote:

"I am very happy here and am finding the work most interesting. We are in reality a part of the



Two meetings at Maungdaw (see p. 41).

25th Indian Div. and both the Divisional Commander and his officers look upon us, I think, as 'belonging' to them. They certainly seem to appreciate what Toc H is trying to do for the troops in this area. There is no doubt but that the B.O.R.'s (*British Other Ranks*) and I.O.R.'s (*Indian Other Ranks*) do need our interest and help. Conditions during the day and night patrols are necessarily very trying, so you can understand how anybody would do their best to make a Toc H Club in such an operational area as comfortable and as attractive as possible . . . I hope I shall have the opportunity of 'moving on' with this Division."

In mid-January he reported progress to John Callfe (Assistant Commissioner, Far East), and here are some extracts from his long letter:

"Our comfortable *basha* (hut) closed down, with many regrets, on Jan. 10. We were given priority in getting away, but, of course, that meant that the men remaining lost their 'home,' which I think they had appreciated. However, I have hopes that they will soon catch up with us. The Div. naturally want us to serve the most forward troops first, and I am sure that this coincides with the views of Alan (Cowling) and yourself.

A few days before we left, we were delighted suddenly to find that Egerton (*Spanton, of Toc H Argentine*) and B.O.R. Elliot had driven up to our *basha* in a lorry containing all our old equip-

ment. This was a most welcome surprise. Everything was unloaded and stored in the *basha*. After some refreshing tea and biscuits—which they badly needed!—and a talk, Egerton and Elliot left for Maungdaw. We opened the case containing the crockery, because Elliot had told me that he had distinctly heard ominous rattles inside. There were rattles all right and they came from many pieces of broken crockery, but there was nothing really to worry about."

A soldier standing by, who had been a packer in civvy street, "seemed depressed at the sight" and gave them expert advice how to avoid trouble next time. The only other case they could not refrain from opening contained a great prize, a gramophone—"a lovely machine—I never expected anything so good."

"Early on the morning of the 10th we packed our goods and chattels and loaded them into a 3-ton lorry. By the way, I have been given this lorry for our exclusive use for as long as it can be of any service to us. We joined a road convoy and made our way, slowly but surely and through many 'ups and downs,' to the tip of the peninsula. We had been issued with 'K' rations for a certain number of days, and Toc H was able to supply, *en route*, cigarettes for the B.O.R.'s—they had no fags at all. I know what it is like to be without a smoke!

All at Sea

Then began the business of getting to sea. Having obtained a sailing permit from the beach commander, I was told that we could take our 3-tonner over, loaded as she was. I soon discovered that it was a case of 'catch-as-catch-can' on the beach; one simply had to manage for one's self. A certain empty landing-craft appeared to be heading for our position on the beach, so, as she approached the shore, we backed our lorry into the water. A friendly Naval officer waved us on, and, thus encouraged, we went ahead—or, rather, astern. A number of 15-cwt. vehicles, which were on either side of us on the shore and all 'revved-up,' seeing our 3-tonner wading through the water, apparently decided to wait for another chance. A lonely jeep followed closely on our heels, and the two of us were just able to squeeze inside the vessel. Thus we successfully embarked on to and into the barge. After an uneventful and pleasant trip, we landed safely on the opposite shore. You will know where that was!"

(John Callfe adds the footnote: "It isn't against security to tell you that the place Arthur mentions is Akyab, and 'Talbot House, Akyab' will be open by the time this arrives. It was 'pre-fabricated' in readiness for entry. Bill Eley will be Warden." The Club opened on February 7).

The A.Q. (? *Assistant-Quartermaster General*), who was on the beach, invited me to drive with him to Div. H.Q., our bus following on behind. He gave me a lot of interesting information, which I will not mention now, but the really important thing for us is this—that our mobile Toc H will not open up *here*, as any day now we are to accompany Advance H.Q. on another sea trip to another part of Burma, which was mentioned in the news two or three days ago . . .

Among old Friends

I should like to tell you of the interesting time I had this morning. At the port, in the centre of the 'town' (I suppose one must call it that, though nearly every house in every street is smashed), is a military hospital, a pre-war convent. Here are lying many wounded men from an English regiment that I used to visit in Maungdaw days . . . I had brought with me books, magazines and bars of chocolate—enough to go round, anyway. The C.O. and Matron gave

us a great welcome, and our humble 'comforts' were distributed to all the men. It was the least Toc H could do during our very short stay here, don't you think? The men (at any rate, so they said) were very happy to know that Toc H intended to be with them throughout the campaign. Please do not think I am saying all this in any personal sense . . . The Matron, by the way, arrived only last night from the place where Sheridan is working. She spoke very highly of our Toc H activities there . . .

The Div. is looking after us very well. I have a 180-lb. tent for my own use, and am at the moment messing with Transport: normal messes are very broken up just now. Sanders (*his Gunner orderly*) is very comfortable in the H.Q. Sergeants' mess, and our I.O.R's (*Indian orderlies*) are quite happy. I am learning the vast difference between 'mobile' and 'static.' But it is a healthy life and full of interest . . . We are all fit and well, and there is an atmosphere of intense keenness—it is really most inspiring."

2. A Circle in Being

A copy of a cable (prefaced by all manner of mysterious 'stage directions') to S.E.A.C., the daily newspaper of South East Asia Command, has reached us from official sources. It reads:

"When Tubby Clayton first threw open Talbot House to war-weary troops in Flanders, he can scarcely have imagined that one day its mobile counterpart would appear in the jungles of the Far East, carrying on the same good work. Yet today, housed in a three-ton lorry and travelling everywhere with a 14th Army Division, Toc H brings music and reading-matter to forward troops and provides a place of rest for men just out of the line.

The Reading and Rest Room consists of a pent-house, erected from the lorry, but there are comfortable cushions on the chairs, a plentiful supply of good books on the shelves, a gramophone with a wide selection of records and a wireless set. These things mean a lot to men, who, in action must live in makeshift *bashas* or crouch in low bivouacs, writing their letters or reading their few books by the fitful light of a hurricane lamp!

In the same Division the more spiritual side

of Toc H is also developing. Just as in peacetime, up an out-of-the-way valley, you might find an unobtrusive notice 'Toc H, Wednesday eight o'clock,' so in odd corners, in and out of the line, men calling themselves a 'Toc H Circle' meet and talk and work, in their own phrase, for 'the Kingdom of God in the wills of men.' The 'Kopial' Circle started in the Division after the Battle of Kohima. A newly-arrived Padre saw possibilities and was given a free hand. Soon notices were out, inviting those who were members of Toc H, and those who were interested, to meet in the Church Tent. Twelve men of all ranks met, the Circle was formed and named in commemoration of the Kohima-Imphal Road.

At the first meeting the Ceremony of 'Light' was celebrated, a candle being used in place of the Lamp. Since then the Royal Engineers have produced a wooden Lamp, skilfully carved in accordance with the original design, which burns oil. Each Wednesday the Lamp is lit, wherever the Division may be. It is a small light but a steadfast one, a light of hope and renewed endeavour to conquer evil and hate, to stimulate a spirit of friendship and co-operation and, in the words of the founder himself, 'to convey the contagion quickly.'"

3. 'On the Road to Mandalay'

Last month Frank Field gave us a glimpse of a Toc H Mobile Club "on the road to Mandalay." More of the picture emerges in the following letter, dated January 10, from Arthur Crees, who works with him:

"We have been very busy flitting around from post to post. We expected to be 'mobile' but not quite so mobile as the last week or two! We've had nine moves in sixteen days, and another three planned in the next six days. The troops up here have been moving so fast that we have had our work cut out to keep up with them.

We have covered about 400 miles so far since leaving Imphal a little over a month ago, and have pitched our tents in many strange places in the hills, valleys and plains. We have been in a teak forest and an ebony forest, also in a bamboo jungle, on a beautiful plateau overlooking the Chindwin River, on a mountain side, in the Kabaw Valley (called 'Death Valley' out here), in paddy fields, in a coconut grove, in the midst of a group of Burmese temples and on the banks of the Mu River. We are now in a banana grove a few miles from Schwebo, from whence we can hear the roar of the guns. We have no complaint of monotony in our job out here!

Board and Lodging

We don't always pitch up our tents, but take advantage of any existing buildings near at hand—it saves time. At the moment our 'set-up' is an open-fronted building in a local *Chong*, about 20 ft. by 12 ft., with a rail in front, and our tables and chairs are spread about under some beautiful trees all around, just like a tea-garden. Last night we had over 200 blokes sitting around, listening to a concert of gramophone records in the dark: we have to be very careful about black-out hereabouts.

Everywhere we go we are received with wide-open arms, and it is very satisfying to know that the little we can do to give these grand chaps a little comfort and amusement is so well appreciated. To watch the expression on their faces when they first see our set-up, with comfortable folding chairs with pink cushions, tables with blue or green tablecloths, curtains up at the windows, books, magazines and papers, alone is worth all the trouble of coming to this part of the world. They will do anything for us, and their regret at our parting is very genuine; they look forward all the more to meeting us again at some later date. I am sure they never expected to see a set-up like this so far forward.

The Burmese have lost faith in money since the Japs flooded the country with their own issue of currency, and we are getting rather good at bartering with them. So far we have got eggs, bananas, onions and tomatoes in exchange for cigarettes and matches, a good-laying (we hope!)

4. Toc H in the Air

Arthur Crees' suspicion that George Westbrook, "coming down from the North with 36 Div.," might be first into Mandalay, receives some support from a newspaper correspondent. *The Star* (London) of December 30 pictures him as more 'mobile' than any lorry; the reporter writes:

"Front line troops in Burma often speak of the transport plane which circles overhead each week and drops supplies by parachute. 'George's plane' they call it, for George Westbrook, of Clockhouse-road, Beckenham, is the welfare officer from Toc H.

hen for an old vest, and are now trying to negotiate some ducks in exchange for a blanket: these would make a very welcome change in our diet. All our food and supplies reach us by parachute droppings, and the tinned food, though quite good, tends to be a bit monotonous—so you can imagine what some fresh fruit and vegetables mean to us all up here.

Alarms and Excursions

We had a very good 'do' at Christmas, which we celebrated on December 21. Chicken, peas, beans and potatoes, Christmas pud., with rum sauce, and mince pies—all out of tins! On New Year's Eve we were having a grand local talent concert, which was interrupted by a report that paratroops were expected, so we spent the whole night 'standing-to' in the command post of a Heavy Ack-Ack Battery, with whom we were then functioning, and on New Year's night we again had a scare, and spent forty minutes helping to man a slit trench at the same post. We had an air-raid alarm three days ago, and saw some Jap 'Oscars' drop bombs about three miles off—it felt quite like old times! On one occasion recently we had two prisoners parked in our set-up for the night. It was raining cats and dogs, and without our place the guards and prisoners would have been out in the open all night, so, for the guards' sake, we let them in.

After this hectic period, we hope to stay for a week or ten days 'static' at Schwebo, and then move forward again rapidly to Mandalay. We have already approached the powers that be for a good building there (if there are any left when we get in), but George Westbrook is coming down (with another *Toc H* 'Mobile') from the North with 36 Div. and stands a chance of beating us to it.

Our only grouse so far has been that we are moving about so much that our mail takes several weeks to catch up with us, but when we do get it, it's usually quite a big batch. . . . It's a grand time we are having out here, and neither Frank nor I have any regrets whatever for having come. I only wish I had been able to get here much earlier."

I was told something today of his work, which began after 100 officers and men, having a break from the hazards of the front line, stayed at the Toc H centre in Digboi. They wanted a welfare officer, and George Westbrook, who was working at the centre, agreed to take on the job.

His home—made of parachutes and bamboo sticks—is mobile. As the division advances he goes forward with them.

He has a battery wireless set, and a gramophone with enough records for a three-hour programme.

He is often to be found at the front with the men. 'He shot his way out of a jam with a tommy gun on one occasion,' said a Toc H official."

5. A Club for West Africans

A Public Relations Officer with the West African troops in India and Burma gives this report of a 'Toc H Jungle Club':

West African troops have their own canteen, their own writing room and full use of the library at a Toc H Jungle Centre just opened only a few miles from the Burma border; it caters for all troops of the 14th Army in the area.

"The ratio of West Africans to British who visit the recreational centre is nearly three to one," the Warden, Ronald Littlewood of Chester, told a West African Forces Observer, "so naturally we do everything to make them happy."

Although he has never been in touch with them before, Littlewood has got to like the West Africans so much that he has obtained permission to retain one as his own permanent bearer as long as the soldier concerned is in the area.

"At the moment we are entertaining twenty thousand troops a month," he continued, "and the section for B.O.R.'s has only been opened that long. More than £1,000 has been spent from Toc H funds in furnishing and fitting out the centre which was built for Toc H by the Army.

Also, built at the same time, was a bamboo garrison theatre capable of holding nearly 500, which has already been visited by a B.E.S.A. concert party, and on another occasion by the band of the North Staffs Regt. The theatre is not part of the Toc H property, although within the confines of the cantonment.

The African's reading room, and writing room, is furnished with lace curtains, brightly-coloured

deck chairs and tables with magazines neatly laid out. Adjoining it is the library which is available to all visitors.

"I have been amazed to find how many of the Africans can read, and the types of books they go for," Littlewood added. "Scores of them for instance have asked for biographies of Mr. Churchill, and a very large number seem to want this type of book. To a great extent they prefer to amuse themselves with snakes and ladders and ludo, but in the British canteen organised quiz competitions, tombolas, Whist Drives, darts matches and the like are held every night. In addition, in the evening you can get a slap-up meal of fried eggs (yes, in the plural!), bacon and chips, and a sweet."

There is also a recreation room for B.O.R.'s with easy chairs and sofas with beige cushions trimmed with blue, and a special writing room; and there are private cubicles where British and Africans alike are shortly to be able to get a hot 'tub' if they arrive feeling dusty and tired. There is one building of these for each section of the camp.

Although naturally there are transport difficulties, stocking the canteen is not proving so difficult as was first anticipated. At the canteen the Africans ask for very much the same sort of things as the B.O.R.'s. They even buy the same cigars and drink even greater quantities of tea than their British colleagues. Apart from these items the fresh white bread to be bought in the canteen is the most popular commodity and is bought by loaves at a time.

6. 'I.M.F.T.U.'

Last month we printed a short account by Bill Eley of the Toc H share in the day's work of an Indian Malaria Forward Treatment Unit—the new form of hospital and rehabilitation camp for troops suffering from malaria in S.E.A.C. We noted that the normal three weeks' treatment, carried out not far behind the fighting area, provides a first week in bed, a second of recreation and 'occupational therapy' (in which Toc H finds great opportunities) and a final week of getting the patient fit for return to his duty as a soldier. W. C. ('Taffy') Davies, who is working in another IMFTU with Egerton Spanton (of Toc H Argentine) now gives us an account of how the Toc H team installs itself and what its programme is:

"The three IMFTU's so far provided with Toc H staff are to be found in the 14th Army area on the Arakan front. No. 1 has the distinction of

being the only one in Burma—but only just! The first one to open in this area was No. 1, beating No. 2 by twenty-four hours. Both Wardens set out from Calcutta together, but, on reaching the embarkation point, they parted company, as the river steamers were too small to accommodate the gear of the two units at the same time.

A Furnishing Problem

The new venture has presented new problems, not the least of which is equipment—by which I mean furniture.

In equipping these units, one had all sorts of things to contend with. The fullest consideration has to be given to transport by rail, road, and river. This will inevitably influence the furniture one buys, in that one has to economise on space. Bearing this in mind, we decided to get as much folding furniture as possible. This in itself created another problem, as our chief difficulty was to combine maximum durability with the maximum compactness. We achieved the latter, but unfortunately not the former. After a fourteen-hour trip on these Arakan roads by truck, much of the furniture folded up literally as well as by intent! We should have pre-

ferred to have got the furniture in Calcutta, but on the score of expense and the bigger transport problem involved, we were forced to seek our goods and chattels nearer the scene of operations, and we bought all the furniture in Chittagong. This had the disadvantage we saw at the start, that the expenses were cut, but the quality suffered. However, under the circumstances this could not be helped; there is an acute shortage of seasoned wood in India, and we had most of the unseasoned stuff unloaded on us!

Before buying the equipment, I had a preliminary look round No. 1 IMFTU, and in consultation with the C.O. decided on the type of furniture outlined above. In addition we sited the *bashas*, three in all. A large recreation hall 69 ft. by 40 ft., a Quiet Room 40 ft. by 20 ft., and the Warden's *basha*, all conveniently situated near each other. Then we got to work. Fortified by much *char* and assisted in the language difficulty by the Y.M.C.A. Indian Officer, we proceeded to the 'Street of Cabinet Makers' to do the necessary purchasing. After a protracted session, we finally decided on deck chairs which have proved the best investment, folding chairs and tables, and a few large arm chairs. On my 'rece' of the site, I gave my moving-in day as May 21, and right on time I pulled alongside the jetty of No. 1 IMFTU and off-loaded all our stuff. We had one preliminary set-back at the embarkation point. Movement Control were not expecting us, but a spot of telephoning here and there soon got us passage on one of the river steamers going about their lawful occasions in this part of the world.

During the interval of waiting for the furniture to be made, I spent the time with Sheridan and Stein in Calcutta packing the remainder of the equipment which had to be gathered together. This was made up of in-door and out-door games, sports gear, gramophone and records, Penguin library and various odds and ends, rugs, etc. We decided to pack this all in one crate, to save supervision and possible loss on the journey from Calcutta to the Arakan. In this way we reduced the number of crates to four; two each. With very many misgivings, we set out in the early morning of May 22, visualising the literal collapse of all the coolies who beheld the crates, but nothing happened and we got them aboard without any untoward incidents. In due time we arrived at the last stage of our journey. Here we met the first spot of trouble—the coolies at this stage gave one look at our *burra* boxes and jibbed. After much nattering among themselves, I murmured the magic formula '*Bakshish*' and as usual it worked. Off went the crates and into the train for the last stage to Chittagong.

At Chittagong, the road transport was waiting us with Spanton, provided by a West African G.P.T. Co., and they made short work of the crates and collected all the furniture from the bazaar, and at about 2 p.m. we set off for the forward area. The journey was uneventful, save for one or two breakdowns, but we made the rest camp without serious mishap at midnight, and set off on the final stage, the river trip, next

morning. We were extremely fortunate in beating the monsoon; apart from one or two showers, we escaped very well. Much of the road is impassable during the rains.

Moving In

The main *basha* was not quite ready for me to move into, but this didn't take long to complete, and with many willing hands everything was soon in place, the pictures (railway posters) on the walls, curtains on the windows, and gradually the place became home-like.

One snag revealed itself as soon as the furniture was set up. The tables had a tendency to assume all sorts of drunken attitudes. Not having had any previous experience of bamboo floors, we failed to see the effect they would have on the furniture. We were not to remain long in ignorance. The stresses inflicted on the chairs in particular soon revealed the weak spots, and they collapsed right and left. We solved the problem of the tables by bracing the corners, but the chairs were another cup of tea. However, fortune was on our side: enter two Pioneers with malaria and our troubles with furniture repairing were over. Randall and Stainer (I never did succeed in telling which was which) worked miracles with a saw, hammer, pincers, screw-driver, and the local utility tool-weapon, the *dah*, as their sole equipment. They screwed and cut and stuck bits here and there and fixed us up, proper 'fancy', in all directions!

The stage came in for their attention too. This was a natural stage, really. We sited the *basha* on a tobacco patch which had a bank at one end, and very little work was necessary to turn it into a very serviceable stage. Randall and Stainer set to work and soon had side wings, back set and proscenium erected. They hung the curtains which the friendly Quarter-master provided, and with the help of one of the nursing orderlies, Thompson, the drapings of dark blue and old gold were fixed up to make it one of the most attractive stages in the Arakan. So much for the equipment and the buildings.

Programme

The programme is a varied one and caters, or attempts to, for all sides of the individual. The week begins with a Service on Sunday in the Main *Basha*. This is taken by Padre M. G. Taylor of 23 C.C.S. Fortnightly Communion Services are held, in the Quiet Room. It is not possible to hold morning Services as we have to share the Padre with two other units in this area. Classical Gramophone Concerts are laid on in the Quiet Room on Sunday evenings also.

Monday morning sees us getting our teeth into 'Current Affairs.' A tough, not very popular, session this. The evening is taken up with a Quiz, Brains Trust or Talk.

Tuesday morning, the men can do handicrafts if they chose, leather work or embroidery. In the afternoon those not on treatment, can go to the pictures—a first-class projector and sound equipment and films not too old. Tuesday evening is given up to debates; subjects so far have

been 'More Power to Trade Unions?', 'Home Rule for Wales?', 'Classical Music or Jazz?'

On Wednesday mornings fresh issues of handicraft materials takes place. The men may continue to make anything at any time, but we only issue material on definite days and times. On Wednesday evenings they play 'Tombola.' From this we deduct about 5 per cent. to provide prizes for Whist Drives, etc.

Thursday morning is handicraft again. In the evening we get Whist Drives.

Friday morning, Padre's Hour. Friday night is invariably a free night, in which to amuse themselves how they please.

Saturday morning, handicrafts again. Saturday evening, Whist Drive. On occasions these nights have to be re-arranged owing to the visit of various Concert Parties, etc.

In addition to the set programme, the men on their rehabilitation do gardening. They have turned the patch in front of the big *basha* into an attractive lawn, complete with rustic seats and a summer house. The paths to the Quiet Room run across this, and we are trying to grow shrubs along it. Each corner has its shrub in an old rum keg, painted red and black. The vegetable garden is on another part of the 'estate' and things are coming along quite well, though suffering from too much water. Along the side of the main *basha*, there was just enough room to lay down a Tennis-Quoit Court. We are only waiting for this to dry out to play on it.

Among the remainder of their activities are fishing and swimming. One patient here is an enthusiastic angler, but always forgets one thing. He fails to hang on to the end of his line. Consequently he has lost about fifteen. Fortunately they were not Toc H lines!

Good Morale

Another very good contribution to the good morale of the men is the arrangement whereby an Officer from the units having men here as patients, visits them once a week, bringing their mail, etc., with him. This applies to Indian troops too. Every Thursday night a nominal

roll of all men who will be here the following week is sent off to the units concerned. This serves the dual purpose of sending along their Welfare Officer, or if that is not possible, it enables them to check the roll for the re-forwarding of mail. In addition to this we make doubly sure the unit knows where the man is; a card for each man is made out informing his unit to which hospital, and when, he has been admitted. All this makes a tremendous difference to the happiness of the men whilst here. Malaria has a very depressing effect on an individual and as much as possible is done to counteract it.

A fresh scheme has been started by the Army Education Corps during the past month. For one week in every month, a W.O.I and a Jemadar (Indian Warrant Officer) visit the unit to assist in the task of mental rehabilitation among B.O.R's and I.O.R's. Up to now, we may claim, that as far as the B.O.R. is concerned, it is no improvement on the Toc H method. The Indian soldier is another problem. The Jemadar can, and does, do a tremendous job of work there, which we, for obvious reasons, cannot do.

The great thing about this job, though, is to get the men to do a lot of the running of it themselves. I have been lucky in this respect; the lads here are a grand lot, and all this about their low morale is just twaddle. They've got their tails well up and if you can keep chirpy with a dose of Malignant Malaria, nothing will get you down. I have a small House Committee, which never meets! There's no need; they do what needs doing without being told. The library is open twice daily, and the librarian refuses to go to the pictures on Tuesday afternoon, because he says, 'someone might need a book.' Well, that's the spirit of the 14th Army and the men in these IMFTU's. These men have been here a long time; many of them have had Malaria many times (our star case was a man with twenty attacks), but they can still keep smiling. As for my part here, it's a very small one, and I consider it a great privilege to be given the opportunity to work among the so-called 'forgotten Army.' I shall not forget them, or their spirit, long after the war is over."

A TOC H CONCERT AT STRATFORD

Many things conspired to make the Toc H Concert on February 4 in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon an outstanding success in the long series for our War Services Fund. A public meeting in the Town Hall, under the chairmanship of the Mayor, combined with the work of our local members and the proceeds of a 'bring-and-buy' sale, assured that the local expenses were covered beforehand. The place, with its great tradition, and the artistes were worthy of the occasion. An anonymous friend had

brought from Birmingham a piano on which Lina Milkina, a fine Russian pianist, could be asked to play. Florence Hooton gave a fine 'cello performance of an Elgar concerto. She was followed by John McKenna singing Cesar Franck's lovely *Panis Angelicus*. Harold Craxton, who has helped in these concerts from the first days, was at the piano. In the interval John McKenna made a moving appeal for Toc H work among our men on the Burma front, where he himself is likely to meet them in the near future.

THE ELDER BRETHREN

ALMY.—Killed in action on the Western Front in October, 1944, NATHANIEL HENRY ALMY, a member of Barrow-on-Soar Branch. Elected 30.6.'43.

ARBER.—On December 29, 1944, suddenly, PERCY H. ARBER, formerly President of the Toc H Rugger Club.

BRYERS.—On January 15, the Rev. J. S. BRYERS, aged 70, a founder member of Bowers Gifford Group. Elected 29.11.'29.

CARR.—In December, 1944, GODFREY FRANCIS CARR, a member of Norwich Branch.

DOWSE.—On December 21, 1944, suddenly while making his farewell speech to the School where he had been Headmaster for 23 years, GERALD DOWSE, O.B.E., former Chairman of St. Helens District. Elected 5.1.'27.

DRURY-LOWE.—On January 24, Vice-Admiral SIDNEY R. DRURY-LOWE, C.M.G. Elected at Mark VII 1.4.'21.

FARLEY.—Killed in action in North West Europe in October, 1944, ALBERT RICHARD C. FARLEY, a member of Teignmouth Branch. Elected 20.10.'39.

FRY.—On January 15, RODERICK JAMES FRY, of Bristol, aged 80, a friend and supporter of Toc H since 1915.

GARDNER.—Reported missing in September, 1944, now reported killed in action, JOHN GARDNER, Flight-Sergt., R.A.F., son of the Rev. Courtenay Gardner (a founder member of Cheltenham Branch, 1920).

HACKER.—On January 11, suddenly, H. J. HACKER, a member of the General Branch (Western Area). Elected 1.7.'20.

HAWKINS.—Died of wounds in Italy on January 8, ERIC JOHN HAWKINS, Lieut., aged 26, a member of Ashby-de-la-Zouche Branch. Elected 18.9.'36.

HERBERT.—Killed in action in October, 1944, in Italy, HENRY HERBERT, a member of Aston Manor Branch. Elected 31.1.'36.

JACKSON.—On December 14, 1944, WILLIAM JACKSON, Secretary of Tenbury Wells Branch. Elected 10.7.'39.

LEWIS.—On December 26, 1944, CHARLES JOHN LEWIS, aged 77, a member of Ashby-de-la-Zouche Branch.

MASON.—Reported missing in August, 1944, now reported killed in action, CARL VICTOR MASON, Flight-Lieut., R.A.F., a member of Harehills Branch. Elected April, '38.

NIGHTINGALE.—In January, the Rev. ALBERT E. NIGHTINGALE, aged 71, first Free Church Padre of Penzance Branch. Elected 9.11.'25.

NORMAN.—On February 4, after long illness, G. P. NORMAN, former Secretary of Sutton Coldfield Branch. Elected 28.1.'37.

ROTHENSTEIN.—On February 14, Sir WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN, aged 73, late Principal of the Royal College of Art, an early friend and helper of Toc H.

SEALEY.—In January, E. W. SEALEY, a founder member of Southborough Branch. Elected 16.1.'29.

SMITH.—On January 16, suddenly, GEORGE ('BRINY') SMITH, a founder member and, in turn, Secretary, Pilot and Chairman of Barrow-on-Soar Branch. Elected 29.6.'33.

THOMAS.—On January 6, in an accident at work, ARTHUR THOMAS, a member of Barry Branch. Elected 10.4.'41.

WHEELER.—Killed by enemy action at sea in September, 1944, RONALD WHEELER, Cpl., R.A.F., a member of Bath Branch and first Secretary of Bath Services Club. Elected 9.5.'33.

Forthcoming Toc H Publications

A revised edition of *Tales of Talbot House*, 1915-1918, is now in the press (price 1s. 3d.). It forms Part I of 'The Story of Toc H.' Part II, *The Birth of a Movement*, 1919-1922, is also now in the printers' hands and will soon be available at the same price. (This is a revised edition, now uniform in size with *Tales*, of *The Years Between*, issued in 1933 as a Supplement to the JOURNAL). *Asleep or Awake?*, four articles by Barclay Baron in last year's JOURNAL, is now published as a 36-page booklet